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PEACE-BUILDING IN WEAK STATES: A U.S. GLOBAL IMPERATIVE

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PEACE-BUILDING IN WEAK STATES: A U.S. GLOBAL IMPERATIVE

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ABSTRACT

There has been growing international concern about the threat to global security posed by failed and failing states since the beak-up of the Soviet Union, but more acutely since the events of 11 September, 2001. Terrorist and a host of other transnational threats operate from the shadows of weak state safe heavens and if left unchallenged will continue to threaten American interest around the world. Peace-building is an effective method that can be used by the international community for managing the complex problem of dealing with critically weak states. What are the implications for future United States peace-building strategy in confronting this growing global challenge given the current operational environment? This paper attempts to answer this question by describing the threat posed by failed and failing states, characterizing the key aspects of failed and failing states, explaining what peace-building is and placing the evolution of United States peace-building policy in historic context and finally suggesting implications for peace-building policy.

PEACE-BUILDING IN WEAK STATES: A U.S. GLOBAL IMPERATIVE

> The most powerful weapon in our arsenal is the hope of human beings –
> the belief that the future belongs to those who would build and not destroy;
> the confidence that conflicts can end and a new day can begin.

—Barack Obama[1]

There has been growing international concern about the threat to global security posed by failed and failing states since the beak-up of the Soviet Union, but more acutely since the events of 11 September, 2001. The concept of peace-building was born from this concern and the recognition of an urgent need for the international community to address the issue of failed and failing states. What are the implications for future United States peace-building strategy in confronting this growing global challenge? This paper attempts to answer this question by describing the threat posed by failed and failing states, characterizing the key aspects of failed and failing states, explaining what peace-building is and placing the evolution of United States peace-building policy in historic context and finally suggesting implications for peace-building strategy.

Threats Posed By Failed and Failing States

On 12 October 2000, 17 American Sailors were killed as the result of a terrorist attack on the USS Cole while docked in a Yemeni port. Almost a year later, on 11 September 2001 the near simultaneous terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, emanating from Afghanistan, claimed the lives of 2,973 on American soil. More recently, on 25 December 2009, a Nigerian born terrorist attempted to explode a suicide bomb on a Northwest Airlines flight as it was on final approach to Detroit. It was later determined that the attacker received explosives training in Yemen. While this

attack was not successful, it did serve as a stark reminder to the America public and government officials that eight years beyond the 11 September 2001 attacks, the United States remains vulnerable to those who wish to do the nation harm. The lasting effects and sobering images of these attacks have forever altered the way America views its security.

Common among the attacks listed above is the fact that each was linked to the transnational terrorist organization known as al-Qaeda and each was spawned in nations that are considered to be failed or failing states. Failed and failing states represent a growing threat not only to America, but they also threaten global security at large. The recent attacks in India, Madrid and London are a testament to the idea that America is not alone in the war on terror. While terrorist networks like al-Qaeda arguably represent the most cogent threat to American and global security, a number of other transnational threats, from the illicit drug trade to human trafficking to pandemic disease, also find fertile ground in failed and failing states. In recent years piracy on the open seas has garnered world-wide attention. Pirates based out of the failed state of Somalia are perhaps the most notorious, disrupting commercial shipping lanes that transit in the vicinity of the Horn of Africa. This emerging phenomenon was introduced in prime-time to the American public with the Somali pirates' seizing of the Maersk Alabama and taking as hostages an American crew in April 2009. The ordeal was brought to a favorable end after five days when the United States Navy liberated the crew, killing three of the four pirates and taking into custody the forth. Given the demonstrated threat to US security interests posed by failed and failing states, there is an urgent need for the United States to provide strong and persistent leadership in

international intervention efforts. Left alone, there seems to be little capacity or will within troubled states to prevent them from becoming breeding grounds and safe havens for a variety of insidious activities.

<u>What are Failed and Failing States?</u>

It is useful at this point to establish an understanding of what characterizes a failed or failing state, as well as to gain an appreciation for the challenges they present to the international system. Absolute consensus on a precise definition for a failed or failing state is an elusive target; however, there is general agreement that nations which lack the capacity or will to perform the basic functions of providing essential public services, fostering equitable economic growth, governing legitimately, enforcing the rule of law and providing security for its population meet the criteria.

Several reputable national and international organizations have published studies that assess states based on the relative degree that they exhibit characteristics associated with being a failed state or at risk of failing. However, two studies in particularly seem to capture the essence of what it means to be a failed and failing states. The Fund for Peace publishes a "Failed States Index" annually in *Foreign Policy* magazine as part of its overarching mission of preventing war and alleviating the conditions that cause war.[2] The Index is compiled using 12 economic, political, and social indicators for the purpose of measuring factors that may be indicative of impending conflict.[3] The 2009 Fund for Peace Index lists 60 countries that the Fund considers to be in various stages of failure. This Index can be a useful tool for the international community as they consider where and how to apply conflict averting resources.

In their comprehensive report "Index of State Weakness in the Developing World," Susan Rice and Stewart Patrick evaluated 141 developing countries measuring state "weakness" according to each state's relative effectiveness in four critical dimensions: economic, political, security, and social welfare, which was consistent with the other studies.[4] They defined weak states as "countries lacking the capacity and/or will to foster an environment conducive to sustainable and equitable economic growth; to establish and maintain legitimate, transparent, and accountable political institutions; to secure their populations from violent conflict and to control their territory; and to meet the basic human needs of their population."[5] Rice and Patrick suggested that the findings of previous studies on the subject, while likely meeting the sponsors' purposes, had shortfalls with regard to the scope of their research or the metrics used. These shortfalls, according to Rice and Patrick, limit the finding's usefulness in formulating clear intervention policy and strategy goals.[6] Rice and Patrick address those shortfalls and provide policymakers with a comprehensive and user-friendly tool for assessing the unique dynamics and drivers of instability at play in each of these states.[7] Their holistic approach to assessing and ranking states measured each of the 141 developing country's economic, political, security and social welfare situation against 20 performance indicators which were selected with the specific goal of assisting policymakers "zero in on the challenges of individual states."[8] Rice and Patrick grouped states into cohorts based on their relative weakness ranging from failed states to successful democracies. Of relevant concern to this research are four cohort groups: failed states, critically weak states, weak states, and states to watch. Given its in-depth analysis across a broad spectrum of metrics, the 2008 Index of State Weakness put

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forth by Rice and Patrick shall be the basis for discussion of failed and failing states throughout the remainder of this paper. According to the Index three states are considered to be failed (Somalia, Afghanistan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and an alarming 25 other states are deemed critically weak. Each of these states is a potential incubator for a plethora of dangerous threats to America's security and should not be ignored. States are most attractive to unsavory actors when chaos prevails. Ungoverned or under-governed spaces within weak states are more often than not ripe with those who are desperate and disillusioned. Adding to the convergence of volatile factors is the tendency of weak states to have large populations of unemployed military aged males. Terrorists and criminal organizations can take advantage these conditions to find sanctuary and recruits; both of which serve to further their cause and facilitates their ability to expand their influence beyond the borders of the host country. Without a sustained focus on addressing the complex issues that lead to state weakness, the international community concedes the initiative to the terrorists and criminals.

Peace-building Operations

There are a range of intervention strategies available to the international community for addressing weak states depending on where a particular state is on the scale of relative weakness and the specific nature of the root causes of instability. Within the United Nations and United States, the term peace operations represents the collection of intervention options which includes peace-building, peace-keeping, and peace enforcement. United States Department of Defense Joint Publication 3-07.3 (Peace Operations) defines peace operations as:

A broad term that encompasses multiagency and multinational crisis response and limited contingency operations involving all instruments of national power with military missions to contain conflict, redress the peace, and shape the environment to support reconciliation and rebuilding and facilitate the transition to legitimate governance. Peace operations include peace-keeping, peace enforcement, peace-making, peace-building, and conflict prevention efforts.[9]

Peace-building should be considered within the overarching construct of peace operations. The separate types of activities that comprise the broader group of peace operations are normally mutually supporting and can overlap in application. Peace-building can occur as an independent operation or may be accomplished in conjunction with peace-keeping or peace enforcement. For example, an international peace-building effort can occur simultaneously with an ongoing peace-keeping operation inside a weak state and ultimately enable the conditions required for the successful conclusion of the peace-keeping mission.

Peace-keeping is perhaps the best known and most frequently employed type of peace operations. Joint Publication 3-07.3 defines peacekeeping as:

Military operations undertaken with the consent of all major parties to a dispute, designed to monitor and facilitate implementation of an agreement (cease fire, truce, or other such agreement) and support diplomatic efforts to reach a long-term political settlement.[10]

Since its creation in 1948, the United Nations has carried out over 60 peace-keeping operations; the overwhelming majority of which occurring after 1990.[11]   Peace-keeping operations are traditionally associated with Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter. The decision to initiate a peace-keeping operation is based on the assumptions that open hostilities have ended and all parties involved agree to accept the peace-keeping force. Therefore, peace-keeping forces are generally lightly armed and not expected to

engage in combat operations. Restraint is critical to maintaining the perception of

impartiality and neutrality in the execution of the peace-keeping mission.

Peace enforcement, unlike peace-keeping, assumes that force will likely be

required to accomplish the mission and that one or more of the parties involved will

oppose the peace enforcers. Joint Publication 3-07.3 defines peace enforcement as:

> The application of military force or the threat of its use, normally pursuant
> to international authorization, to compel compliance with resolutions or
> sanctions designed to maintain or restore peace and order.[12]

Peace enforcement is conducted under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

Forces deploy either at the invitation of the one of the parties concerned and/or with the

authorization of the UN Security Council. Peace enforcement is considered a combat

mission and the troops assigned are authorized to use force in carrying out their

mandate. Peace enforcement operations in most circumstances will exceed the United

Nations' ability to plan and execute; therefore they are best carried out by a coalition or

a standing alliance such as NATO, as was the case in 1995 with Operation Joint

Endeavor in the Balkans.[13]   Peace enforcers should not be re-missioned as peace-

keepers since they will likely not be perceived as being impartial by one or more of the

parties involved.[14]

To summarize, peacekeeping and peace enforcement are primarily concerned

with separating belligerent actors and maintaining the peace. In peace-keeping,

external forces are invited in with the consent of all parties and ensure compliance with

existing agreements.   In peace enforcement, external forces will likely have to use force

to end fighting and keep belligerent parties apart.

In contrast, peace-building is concerned with strengthening a state's internal

capacity to manage sustainable peace. Peace-building takes advantage of the time and

space created by peace-keepers or peace enforcers to tackle the root causes of a

state's weakness. Joint Publication 3-07.3 defines peace-building as:

> Stability actions, predominately diplomatic and economic, that strengthen and rebuild governmental infrastructure and institutions in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.[15]

Peace-building is now a commonly used term, but there is not a common definition

among international policymakers, scholars and practitioners. This paper adopts the

Joint Publication definition, however, it is worth looking at a few other definitions of

peace-building to gain a wider perspective and appreciation of the term.

The Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research International group defines

peace-building as "an endeavor aiming to create sustainable peace by addressing the

"root causes" of violent conflict and eliciting indigenous capacities for peaceful

management and resolution of conflict."[16] The independently-funded research center,

Human Security Report Project, puts forth the concept of "human security" to describe

the complex of interrelated threats associated with civil war, genocide and the

displacement of populations.[17] They suggest that securing populations should be the

primary concern of international assistance. The Human Security Report Project

describes two human security proponent viewpoints regarding what threats people

should be protected from. The first, referred to as the "narrow" view of human security,

focuses on the violent threats to individuals.[18] The second, referred to as the "broad"

view of human security, posits that the threat set should be broadened to include

hunger, disease and natural disasters because these kill far more people than war,

genocide and terrorism combined.[19]

The United Nations interpretation of peace-building has evolved over time. In *An

Agenda for Peace*, Boutros Boutros-Ghali described post-conflict peace-building as

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"comprehensive efforts to identify and support structures which will tend to consolidate peace and advance a sense of confidence and well-being among people."[20] The aim of these efforts was to prevent a relapse into conflict, Boutros Boutros-Ghali's thoughts were "Preventive diplomacy is to avoid a crisis; post-conflict peace-building is to prevent a recurrence."[21] The 2000 "Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations" (also known as the Brahimi Report), refined peace-building to mean "activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war."[22]

Historic Context for U.S. Peace-Building

To fully appreciate the current United States peace-building policy and make assumptions about the future, one must first understand the genesis of American political views toward peace operations in general based on its past international experiences. The term peace-building has been a part of the international lexicon since 1992 when the United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali formally introduced "post conflict peace-building" in his landmark report, *An Agenda for Peace.*[23] Despite that fact, the United States did not develop a holistic peace-building strategy until the George W. Bush (Bush 43) administration published National Security Presidential Decision 44 (NSPD-44) in 2005. In terms of policy evolution, thinking within the United States Government on peace-building prior to NSPD-44 was consistent in its views on peace operations as a whole. Therefore, for the purpose of the following review of the evolution of United States peace-building policy, the reader can infer that peace operations includes peace-building.

The evolution of the United States views toward international peace operations (including peace-building) is inextricably linked to how American presidents have perceived America's global role in the post-Cold War era and how they interpreted the nature of United States interests abroad. Additionally, the sometimes tenuous relationship between the United States and the United Nations with regard to international peace operations helped shape United States policy and willingness to participate in international interventions.

Shortly after the United States-led coalition defeated Saddam Hussein's forces to end the 1991 Gulf War, President George H. W. Bush (Bush 41) made his now famous speech in which he laid out his vision for America's role in the "new world order."[24]

> Now, we can see a new world coming into view. A world in which there is the very real prospect of a new world order. In the words of Winston Churchill, a "world order" in which "the principles of justice and fair play ... protect the weak against the strong ..." A world where the United Nations, freed from cold war stalemate, is poised to fulfill the historic vision of its founders. A world in which freedom and respect for human rights find a home among all nations.[25]

President Bush's vision of a "new world order" signaled a new direction for American foreign policy and set the course for a surge in United States involvement in international peace operations. Bush supported new United Nations peace operations in a multitude of troubled countries such as El Salvador, Angola, the former Yugoslavia, Namibia and others. He also launched a United States-led United Nations humanitarian relief mission to Somalia. United Nations peace operations in the 1990s met with mixed success, but it was the experience in Somalia that would serve to again redefine the path of United States policy towards involvement in peace operations.

In January 1993, the Clinton administration began participating in and was optimistic about United Nations peace operations. The Administration coined the term

"assertive multilateralism," which indicated a willingness to be a lead actor in international peace operations.[26] President Clinton committed the United States military to peace operations in Haiti and supported United Nations peace operations in Georgia, Uganda-Rwanda, Liberia and Rwanda.[27] Additionally, American troops were still deployed to Somalia as part of a United Nations humanitarian relief mission begun there in 1992. Somalia would become a turning point in the way the Clinton administration, and United States in general, viewed peace operations as an instrument of foreign policy. The events that transpired in Mogadishu on the 3rd and 4th of October 1993, made famous in the book and movie *Black Hawk Down*, led to a dramatic shift in United States policy with regard to intervention in weak states. On October 3rd, 160 Army Rangers and Special Operations Soldiers entered the city of Mogadishu intent on capturing key members of the warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid's clan. During the mission, two United States Army UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters were shot down and crashed into the city. An intense battle ensued resulting in 19 United States troops being killed. Despite the facts that key members of the clan were indeed captured and as many as 1,500 Somalis were killed, Clinton decided to withdraw American forces yielding to growing public disillusionment with the United States' involvement in the region. As it turned out, the events in Somalia played out just months before the genocide began in Rwanda. While the Clinton administration had ample indications that hundreds of thousands of Rwandan Tutsis were being systematically killed, it failed to act or even acknowledge that genocide was taking place. The reason for this can be traced directly back to the experience in Somalia and that experience would have a lasting impact on United States policy on peace operations. Presidential Decision

Directive 25 (PDD-25), "US Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations," was released in May 1994 and it was immediately clear that the Administration's views had radically shifted. Below is an extract from PDD-25 that illustrates this point:

> The U.S. will support well-defined peace operations, generally, as a tool to provide finite windows of opportunity to allow combatants to resolve their differences and failed societies to begin to reconstitute themselves. Peace operations should not be open-ended commitments but instead linked to concrete political solutions; otherwise, they normally should not be undertaken. To the greatest extent possible, each UN peace operation should have a specified timeframe tied to intermediate or final objectives, an integrated political/military strategy well-coordinated with humanitarian assistance efforts, specified troop levels, and a firm budget estimate.[28]

PDD-25 further described the following factors that would be considered before the United States would support United Nations peace operations:

- UN involvement advances U.S. interests, and there is an international community of interest for dealing with the problem on a multilateral basis.

- There is a threat to or breach of international peace and security, often of a regional character, defined as one or a combination of the following:

    o International aggression

    o Urgent humanitarian disaster coupled with violence

    o Sudden interruption of established democracy or gross violation of human rights coupled with violence, or threat of violence

- There are clear objectives and an understanding of where the mission fits on the spectrum between traditional peacekeeping and peace enforcement.

- For traditional (Chapter VI) peacekeeping operations, a ceasefire should be in place and the consent of the parties obtained before the force is deployed.

- For peace enforcement (Chapter VII) operations, the threat to international peace and security is considered significant.

- The means to accomplish the mission are available, including the forces, financing and mandate appropriate to the mission.

- The political, economic and humanitarian consequences of inaction by the international community have been weighed and are considered unacceptable.

- The operation's anticipated duration is tied to clear objectives and realistic criteria for ending the operation.[29]

Collectively these factors would be become the measuring rod for United States involvement in international peace operations. Domestic politics further complicated United States foreign policy when the Republican Party gained control of the Congress in 1995. Congress, which was critical of the United Nations and its peace operations, withheld millions of dollars that were marked for funding United Nations peace operations and demanded a greater role in determining United States participation in peace operations.[30] Congressional holds on funding for new peace operations in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1999 severely constrained the scope and effectiveness of those missions.[31] Only after heated debate and concessions made by the United Nations concerning keeping the troop numbers and costs to the minimum levels possible did the United States agree to financially support the mission.[32] The net effect of PDD-25 and domestic political posturing was a sharp reduction in United Nations peace operations and a growing rift between the United States and the United Nations. Many in the United Nations believed the United States was concerned

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more with reducing costs than addressing the growing problem of failed and failing states.[33] By the time the Clinton Presidency was coming to an end, peace operations were viewed as a "burden sharing tool that served US and international interests, but one that should be used judiciously."[34] Although Clinton was able to broker a deal with Congress to begin addressing the persistent arrears situation regarding dues owed, America's relationship with the United Nations remained greatly strained.

In contrast to the Clinton administration, the Bush 43 administration initially believed that "nation-building" and United Nations peace operations in general did not serve America's national interests.[35] Early signals from President Bush and ranking members of his administration seemed to indicate that the United States would be "a passive, uninvolved power on peacekeeping issues, or would discourage new operations" and would be extremely reluctant to commit America troops to United Nations missions.[36] The Bush administration's demotion of the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations from cabinet-level status denoted the diminished importance given to the role of the United Nations in American foreign policy.[37]

The 11 September, 2001 al-Qaeda attacks on America would ultimately change the Bush administration's view of the relevance of peace operations on national security. Once al-Qaeda was linked to Afghanistan and the ruling Taliban regime, President Bush went before the United Nations General assembly to make his case for removing the terrorists and conducting post-conflict reconstruction stating:

> America will join the world in helping the people of Afghanistan rebuild their country. . . the United States will work closely with the United Nations and development banks to reconstruct Afghanistan after hostilities there have ceased and the Taliban are no longer in control. And the United

States will work with the UN to support a post-Taliban government that represents all of the Afghan people.[38]

These remarks showed that the Administration had begun to appreciate the connection between failed and failing states to United States national security interests. In his "2002 National Security Strategy" President Bush left little doubt that the Administration had shifted its thinking on the importance of peace operations stating, "The events of September 11, 2001, taught us that weak states, like Afghanistan, can pose as great a danger to our national interests as strong states. Poverty does not make poor people into terrorists and murderers. Yet, poverty, weak institutions, and corruption can make weak states vulnerable to terrorist networks and drug cartels within their borders."[39] It was also apparent that Bush began to see the benefits of working with the United Nations in an effort to stabilize weak states. This renewed spirit of détente between the United States and the United Nations would soon be tested when in 2002 the Bush administration began making its case for invading Iraq. When no United Nations Security Council Resolution was granted for invading in Iraq, the United States formed a "coalition of the willing" outside the auspices of the United Nations and went to war. After decisively ousting Saddam Hussein, the Bush administration soon found itself unwittingly engaged in one of the most ambitious stability and reconstruction campaigns ever attempted. Without a coherent post-conflict interagency strategy, the task of rebuilding Iraq's institutional capacity fell to the military who was ill prepared and under-resourced for the job. Informed by the experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Bush administration began looking to the United Nations and the international community to play a greater role in global security and peace-building efforts.

From 2005 until the end of his presidency, President Bush and his administration made great strides in developing important peace-building related policy. With NSPD-44, the Bush administration established policy for a "whole of government" approach to addressing the problem of weak states and identified the State Department as the lead United States Government agency for stability and reconstruction. The Department of Defense and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) would play key supporting roles as would the Department of Justice and Department of the Treasury. The State Department created the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) to manage the day to day interagency coordination for the nation's peace-building efforts. While the United States policy may have been better suited for meeting the challenge of international peace-building, there was a glaring mismatch between policy goals and funding allocations. This was especially true of the State Department's budget, which was woefully inadequate to meet the expectations and remains so today.

In the Defense Department, peace-building is encompassed within a broader spectrum of operations collectively referred to as *stability operations*. Stability operations are defined as:

> …various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief.[40]

In recognition of the increasing importance of stability operations on national security, Department of Defense Directive 3000.05 (DODD 3000.05) issued in 2005 stating:

> Stability operations are a core U.S. military mission that the Department of Defense shall be prepared to conduct and support. They shall be given priority comparable to combat operations and be explicitly addressed and

integrated across all DOD activities including doctrine, organizations, training, education, exercises, materiel, leadership, personnel, facilities, and planning.[41]

While the Defense Department acknowledged the current necessity of stability operations (including peace-building), there were some within the military who saw such operations as damaging to the Army's readiness to fight and win conventional wars which were viewed as the far greater threat to national security. The debate continues today.

From a policy standpoint, peace-building was now seen as a key tool for addressing security issues posed by weak states. However, the lack of adequate funding and organizational structure limited the government's ability to fully realize the goals established in NSPD-44, especially with regard to the State Department.

In terms of its relationship with the United Nations, the Bush administration's insistence on keeping operational cost low, reluctance to commit American troops, and a recurring tendency to withhold payment of United Nations peace operations dues continued to cast a shadow on the perceived commitment of the United States regarding peace operations.

On January 20, 2009 Barak Obama was sworn in as the 44th President of the United States. His inauguration generated much excitement within the international community as the beginning of his presidency seemed to promise a new era in American foreign policy; one of true multi-nationalism and cooperation with the United Nations. During her confirmation hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, United States Permanent Representative-Designate Susan Rice, provided insights into how the Obama administration would view the role of the United Nations and peace operations in achieving national security objectives. She stated "the United

Nations is also at the center of global efforts to stabilize weak and failing states…we must renew efforts to improve the capacity of the United Nations to undertake complex peace operations effectively."[42] Rice also addressed a long standing source of friction between the United States and United Nations, delinquent payment of dues, when she remarked:

> To lead from a position of strength, the United States must consistently act as a responsible, fully-engaged partner in New York…we must fulfill our financial obligations while insisting on effective accountability…our failure to pay all of our dues and to pay them on a timely basis has constrained the UN's performance and deprived us of the ability to use our influence most effectively to promote reform…(President) Obama believes the U.S. should pay our dues to the UN in full and on time.[43]

It is said that there is no real policy until it is funded. President Obama backed up his administration's rhetoric by requesting a dramatic increase (836 million dollars) for United Nations peace operations funding in his 2009 budget submission to Congress.[44] He has also signaled more willingness than previous administrations to commit America troops to United Nations led peace operations. Another telling indicator of the Obama administration's intent to work more effectively with the United Nations was the restoration of the United States Permanent Representative back to Cabinet-level status. The United States policy outlook, for now at least, seems to be one of positive engagement with the United Nations and the international community to actively address the issue of failed and failing states. However, as was seen during the Clinton and Bush administrations, volatile internal politics and unpredictable global events can radically alter the course of policy.

Implications for Future Peace-Building Policy.

As demonstrated by terrorist attacks directed against the United States, at home and abroad, malicious transnational actors operating with relative impunity from weak

states are a real threat to national security. From the shadows of weak states, terrorists and criminal groups can freely export terror, illicit drugs, and a host of nefarious activities. International peace-building efforts attempt to address the root causes of state weakness with the goal of preventing a state from failing and restoring critical capacity to states that have already failed. The United Nations is the most effective forum for coordinating and organizing peace-building operations, but relies heavily on United States support, especially funding and logistics. United States policy toward peace-building has evolved to the point that United Nations authorized peace-building is now viewed as an important instrument for advancing America's national interests and providing the means for burden sharing the resource intensive business of weak state interventions.

Several constraining factors have implications effecting America's ability to conduct global peace-building operations. First, the United States is still engaged in fighting two protracted counterinsurgencies and will likely remain so at least for the next few years despite the announced withdrawal timelines. The current conflicts are a tremendous drain on diminishing national resources. The costs of the wars, operating tempo (OPTEMPO) of the participating troops and civilians, and eroding political and public will for continued long deployments of American forces all impact on the United States' ability to support peace-building missions. The nature of peace-building demands a sustained commitment as the causes of state weakness are usually deeply rooted and complex; there are no quick fixes. Until the United States can significantly reduce its "boots on the ground" presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, it must rely on the United Nations and international partners to carry the bulk of the hands-on peace-

building burden. The United States can also leverage non-military instruments of national power to achieve peace-building effects. Governmental agencies like USAID and the State Department's S/CRS can provide in-country assistance, depending on the security conditions, and also help build essential peace-building capacity within partner nations to enhance their effectiveness. Such assistance can be accomplished at relatively low cost to the United States.

Second, while Department of Defense Directive 3000.05 established stability operations as a priority mission for the military, there is still debate among some senior defense officials centered on two issues: the long term readiness for full spectrum conflicts; and what the right force structure is for stability operations versus conventional combat operations (both issues are primarily concerned with land forces). One side argues that the military must be trained and organized to "win the current fight." The opposing argument posits that too much focus on the current requirements puts the capability of the military to confront emerging threats at risk. After almost ten years of fighting "among the people," the United States military has become very adept with many of the same skills that are necessary for success during peace-building support missions. However, it is undeniable that proficiency in stability operation skills has come at the cost of losing key conventional skills such as large scale combined arms maneuver.   The need for skilled peace-building forces will remain valid for the foreseeable future. The challenge for senior military leaders is to establish the right balance between two "must do" but divergent missions.

Third, current precarious economic conditions are not conducive to the initiation of new and costly peace-building ventures abroad when many Americans are

unemployed and the national debt is measured in the trillions of dollars. With the economic troubles also affecting many of the otherwise most able peace-building contributing nations, it is imperative to effectively prioritize which weak states pose the most immediate potential security risks. Fifty-six states are considered to be failed, critically weak or weak based on the *Index of State Weakness* developed by Rice and Patrick.[45] The *Index of State Weakness* can be of considerable value as officials grapple with the prioritization process and decide where to focus the limited international resources to meet the most pressing needs.

Finally, the prevailing political atmosphere within the United States is extremely polarized. This might indicate that the Obama administration will face strong opposition, as did Clinton, with any attempt to substantially increase funding or troop commitments for international peace-building efforts. The Obama administration should employ effective strategic messaging to ensure that the American people never lose sight of the threats facing the nation and the comprehensive activities required to defeat them.

Conclusion

Dealing with failed and failing states will continue to dominate the international political, economic and security landscape for the foreseeable future. Peace-building efforts must be a policy and budgetary imperative if the United States is to deny transnational terrorists and criminal actors the freedom to operate in the shadow of weak states. The policies initiated during the Bush 43 administration and largely continued by the Obama administration have the whole of the United States Government poised to make meaningful contributions in working with international partners to address the global challenge of failed and failing states. However, without determined commitment and strong presidential leadership, the realities of two ongoing

wars, an uncertain economic forecast, an antagonistic domestic political climate, and

the sheer multitude of critically weak states will all serve to greatly constrain America's

ability to have sustained transformational effects in weak states. Failure in this

endeavor cannot be seen as an option when nothing short of national security and the

American way of life is at stake.

Endnotes

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